doi:10.7592/FEJF2008.40.varga

FROM FOLK TALES TO POPULAR CULTURE: *POACHING* AND *RELEVANCE* IN THE PROCESS OF HISTORY

Kinga Varga-Dobai

Abstract: In this paper the author examines the concept of relevance and its relationship with poaching, a popular culture activity and a practice detectable in the transition of oral folk tales to literary fairytales, and in the further modification of the genre of fairytales by feminist writers. The author illustrates the practice of poaching with the different versions and variants of the Little Red Riding Hood story, written in different historical eras for different authorial purposes. In the examination of the concept of poaching and relevance, the authors relies on the theories of de Certeau, Fiske and Jenkins as well as Zipes.

Key words: feminist fairy tale, Little Red Riding Hood, narrative research, poaching, popular culture, relevance

The Crow and the Pitcher, one of Aesop's classic fables (Pinkney 2000) is about a clever and thirsty crow who, faced with an inaccessible deep pitcher half full of water, learns that if he drops pebbles in the pitcher, the water will raise and that will allow him to drink. Parents and educators, or children's book writers such as Pinkney retold this story to young audiences and these retellings always introduced some modifications or alterations in the story in terms of style or characters. One of the most original retellings of the fable is the story of the 8-year-old Brooks Wolfe (2006). Her version is called *The Horse & The Bowl.* The story goes like this:

> *Once there was a horse named Harry. Harry was very, very thirsty. Then he came upon a bowl of Gatorade. Harry got excited. He loved Gatorade! But then, the bowl was very narrow and he couldn't stick his tongue in. He tried and he tried but he couldn't get it out. Then he had an idea. He stuck lots of gum balls in the bowl and was able to get the Gatorade* (Wolfe 2006).

Brooks, in her own words, retold this story, changing the main character from a crow to a horse named Harry, exchanging the pitcher for a bowl, water for

Gatorade and pebbles for gum balls. To bring in elements into the story from her own world was perhaps a way to connect with the fable and understand the story on her own terms, through a familiar world. If the crow did not mean too much for Brooks, she changed it to Harry the horse, because this was a better representation of her own reality. Brooks to create her own story was in fact *poaching*. She imbued the structure and story line of the old fable with elements from her own world in order to create *relevance* for herself and maybe for contemporary 8-year-olds in general, who are fond of horses, chewing gum and Gatorade.

This paper is a product of a conceptual work on the issues of *relevance* and *poaching*, terms borrowed from the theories of popular culture. I will examine the concept of relevance and its relationship with poaching both as a popular culture activity and a practice detectable in the transition of oral folk tales to literary fairytales between the 16th and 19th centuries in Europe, and the further modification of this genre in the 20th century by feminist writers. I will focus on the similarities and differences of the poaching activities in the past and present.

For my examination on the transition of folk tales to literary fairy tales I point out that poaching (the act of "making it relevant" through modifying and rearranging) can be discovered all through history in the ways in which various groups attempted to create new meaning for themselves, regardless of their social status, whether they belonged to marginal or dominant groups. Such groups, in order to reinforce certain ideas or, on the contrary, to revolt against certain ideas, created new meanings through poaching.

Thus I identify various groups who engaged in poaching and contributed to the production of new literary genres: the fairy tale or feminist folktales. Members of the bourgeois or aristocratic circles by borrowing the elements of folk tales created stories that mirrored their own life experience. Consequently feminist writers utilized the original folk and fairy tale motifs to create relevance for the 20th-century woman and this as well constituted a poaching activity.

I will exemplify the causal relationship of relevance and poaching through the different versions and variants of the *Little Red Riding Hood* story, written in different historical eras for different authorial purposes.

I rely on the theories of de Certeau (1984), Fiske (1989a, b) as well as Jenkins (1992, 2006) in the examination of the concept of poaching and popular culture and their relationship with a third concept: relevance, as that is defined by Fiske. I also rely on the theories of Zipes (2002: 32) who calls this poaching practice "appropriation" within which the original stories are altered, enlarged or ornamented to mirror the experience of a different group of people.

POACHING, RELEVANCE AND POPULAR CULTURE

Poaching and *relevance* are two closely connected concepts within the theories of popular culture. The relationship between these two concepts is causal and it contributes to the development of a cultural formation called the popular. Theorist of popular culture approached the concept of poaching and examined it in slightly different ways, agreeing however on the fact that poaching is the result of the resistance of a group of people and its aim is to create relevance for the social experience of the group.

Fiske (1989b) defines poaching as a popular culture activity through which marginal groups create relevance for themselves. As marginal groups are not able to find relevance in mainstream culture text, they will use its texts as resources to create their own representations. In order to exemplify this claim, Fiske points to the ways in which TV viewers received and treated media products such as *Charlie's Angels* or *Dallas*, a daytime TV series. Even though *Charlie's Angels* is a reassertion of patriarchal control over feminine liberation, many women found ways to ignore the patriarchal messages and only focused on the strong female characters of the show. To leave the television set before the movie ended was a way to dismiss the ending that emphasized the dominance of the male character over the female characters (Fiske 1989b: 143). Women who watched *Charlie's Angels* found relevance in the portrayals of the female heroes, and ignored male characters and their roles overall. Consequently these women who utilized some of the elements of a dominant culture text to create relevance for themselves, were poaching, the practice of which empowered them to read selectively. Poachers do not feel intimidated by the authority of the text, they select the parts that are meaningful and carry relevance for their experience and ignore the parts that are not. The essence and the aesthetics of the text is ignored, its value rather lies in the relevances it can offer (Fiske 1989b: 145). Relevance requires connections between the text and the social experience of the reader, and if this relevance is absent, people will not be motivated to engage with such texts or gain pleasures from them (Fiske 1989a: 186–187). In the absence of relevance people counterbalance this lack with their own representations through poaching. Fiske claims that individuals who engage in poaching represent the members of popular culture. They are the oral, face-to-face communities among which we move in our daily lives (Fiske 1989a: 186), the subordinated groups in society. Popular culture develops as a result of the resistance of these subordinated people who resent their subordination (Fiske 1989a: 7). Poaching in this context becomes a way to resist and claim relevance.

In *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984) de Certeau examines the term poaching from a similar point of view. He associates poaching with a modification of a text. Relying on previous theories, he maintains that there is a certain type of reading of a text that "cultivates the desire to write: erotic, hunting, and initiatory modes of reading" (de Certeau 1984: 176). Readers who engage in this type of reading do not interiorize the text but rather claim authority and independence over it. By adding a new meaning and relevance they create their own version of the original story. He calls this reading poaching, and this type of readers travelers who like nomads move across lands that belong to someone else, poach their way across fields they did not write, despoiling their wealth for their own enjoyment (de Certeau 1984: 174). Poaching in this sense becomes a series of tactics and games played with the text (de Certeau 1984: 175).

Jenkins as well describes poaching as an act of creating relevance through modifications and re-arranging of the original text. Poachers modify and rearrange, take apart and reassemble the existing text "in making sense of their own social experience" (Jenkins 2006: 40). Jenkins calls it popular reading, practiced by fans, the marginal and the subordinated groups of society, such as women or gays. Members of such groups – women who are oppressed and limited by the culturally prescribed images of woman-hood, or other individuals who feel alienated from society – find a sense of belonging in fan communities, and share similar feelings, thoughts and concerns on certain issues or concepts (Jenkins 2006: 41). These groups constitute and create popular culture. Jenkins exemplifies the process of modification or poaching through the novels of female *Star Trek* fans (Trekkers), such as Karen Bates or Jane Land who altered the characters of the original science-fiction story, in order to challenge the stereotypical images of womanhood. They endowed the female heroes with the ability to overcome obstacles that even the male characters of the original text were not able to overcome, and also pointed to the "overt and subtle forms of sexual discrimination" that professional women face in their everyday working environment (Jenkins 2006: 48). Thus through these modifications, the female fans appropriated *Star Trek* to their own social experience. They not only exposed the difficulty of what it meant to be a professional woman in a patriarchal society but also resisted traditional femaleness by creating powerful roles for the original female characters of *Star Trek*.

Both Fiske and Jenkins claim that popular culture is the culture of subordinated people and poaching becomes a practice through which these marginal people can resist mainstream cultural representations, and create relevance for the social experience of the subordinated. Relevance is indeed a crucial element in the realization of poaching and formation of popular culture. Never-

theless, if we look at the literary products of past centuries, it becomes visible that the creation of relevance through poaching is not only apparent in the process of production of contemporary popular culture texts but also in the practices of previous historical eras. Similar to the 20th-century feminist writers who utilized folk characters to create their own stories about brave and intelligent female heroes, the transition of oral folk tales into literary fairy tales between the 16th and 19th century, reveals how some members of the aristocracy or bourgeoisie appropriated folk tale characters and motifs for a new genre called fairy tales to give voice to their own need for relevance. Thus the folk tale with its subversive and imaginative content has been an important source of inspiration for both contemporary subcultures and for various groups in the past. In order to examine the issue of poaching and relevance in its historical context, further clarification is needed on the concepts of folk and fairy tales, which represent two different genres, even though they share many similarities and are often used interchangeably. This clarification outlines the poaching practices of previous historical groups in search for relevance, and reveals that in fact members of the dominant group engaged in such activities as well.

FROM FOLKTALES TO FAIRYTALES; POACHING IN THE PAST

In the field of folklore studies several different points of view have been developed regarding the place and conditions of origins of folktales as well as their relationship with the literary fairy tales. Carl Wilhelm von Sydow claims that folktales are of Indo-European origin, other folklorists such as Will-Erich Peuckert rather trace them back to the civilization of the Eastern Mediterranean and the Near East (Lüthi 1982: 98). According to Otto Huth, folktales originate from the Stone Age. Contrarily, Jan de Vries maintains that the folktale "as an expression of an aristocratic way of life and conjectures, has emerged whenever a mythic culture has been replaced by a more rationalistic one" (Lüthi 1982: 98). Concerning the relationship of folk and fairy tales, one of the prevailing theories associates folk tales with the peasant population who cultivated the stories through an oral tradition, and fairy tales with a written form mainly addressed to a higher, more educated social class. As folk tales were transmitted through an oral tradition, they often went through changes and modifications. Relying on the existing evidence, Zipes claims that the audiences actively participated not only in storytelling but also in transmitting these tales to other groups. They posed questions for the narrator, made suggestions where and how to change the story line (Zipes 2002: 7). Therefore

some stories existed and still exist in many versions and variants across and within countries. The stories of Jack and the Beanstalk, Cinderella, or Rapunzel exist in different adaptations among different nations. Von Sydow's explanation for the existence of such variants is formulated in his theory of oicotypes. Tales, just as plants, adapt to a certain environment through natural selection and thus differ somewhat from other members of the same species (Bradkūnas 1975). Through the changes the stories became "personalized" dealing with specific problems of a specific group. Even within one culture, the modifications of the story line or character were quite frequent, the changes, "re-writings" of the story being results of a poaching practice that brought about new meanings and relevance in the life of a particular group.

According to Zipes, the real modifications (poachings) of the folktale started in the 16th century and continued all through the 19th century, when members of the bourgeoisie and aristocracy altered the folk perspective of the tales and imbued them with the experience of a different social group, creating thus a new genre: the literary fairy tale (Zipes 2002: 10).

Fairy tales as a literary genre came into existence as a result of the modifications (poaching) of folk tale elements and characters and they were written for different purposes: to educate, to inform, to convey people of certain ideas or expose social realities. Their main source was a mass-culture product – the folk tale. The process of appropriation of oral folk tales to the demands of higher social classes reveals considerable modifications that the writers introduced in order to create relevance for a group of people. The created new genre, the literary fairy tale, was addressed to a different audience and was written from a different perspective than the folk tale. It nevertheless borrowed the motifs and characters of the original folk tale to make relevance and convey new meaning for the new audience. In the 16th–18th century, the first writers of fairy tales – Straparola, Basile, Perrault or Madame D'Aulnoy – were middle-class or aristocratic authors and their stories were written and told to a select group of adult readers, who were part of court or salon society (Zipes 1997: 65). This "select group" who was interested in the genre of fairy tales represented a subculture within the aristocracy and in many ways was similar to the creators and members of modern subcultures described by Fiske or Jenkins, given that both modern-day poachers and Basile or Perrault intended to create relevance for a group of people. Moreover, similar to the roles of stories produced by contemporary poachers, the goal of the stories written by middle-class or aristocratic authors, as Zipes claims, was not only to entertain, but also to produce subversive texts that would expose and challenge the social issues of the time. In the late 17th and early 18th century, some female aristocratic writers as Madame D'Aulnoy or Mademoiselle Bernand created

fairy stories as an opposition to the abuse of the power of King Louis XIV and the Church (Zipes 2002: 28). Through the character of the fairies, the aristocratic writers ridiculed the royal court, but also used these stories to reinforce their supremacy over the bourgeoisie, the emerging powerful middle class. Therefore as a result of the subversive nature of these tales, the reception of fairy tales by the public was controversial (Zipes 2002: 28).

Another challenge for the expansion of fairy tales was the "educational revolution" of the Enlightenment (Zipes 2002: 29) which emphasized rationality and rejected imagination. According to Foucault, Kant describes Enlightenment as the moment when humanity is going to put its own reason to use (Foucault 1984: 38). Enlightenment becomes man's release from his self-incurred tutelage when man is encouraged to "dare to know," to use his own reason (Kant 1995: 1). By the 19th century some members of the aristocracy or bourgeoisie had accepted the fairy tales, the conservative bourgeoisie however rejected both the folk and fairy tales, and rather turned towards the didactic tales written by Christian Friedrich Nicolai, August Wilhelm Iffland or August Friedrich Ferdinand von Kotzebue (Zipes 2002: 29–31). In order to make the fairy tales acceptable and relevant for all social classes, the genre had to go through further changes. The Grimm brothers in the 19th century further appropriated the fairy tales, to the taste and expectations of the bourgeoisie.

The poaching of folk tales or fairy tales is still prevalent in our contemporary society. The well-known Perrault and Grimm versions have been challenged and imbued with the relevances of the new generations that followed. Feminist writers represent an important subculture in contemporary times and introduced major changes in the bourgeoisie representations of these traditional tales and in fact developed a new genre called feminist folk tales.

RELEVANCE AND POACHING IN THE STORY OF "LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD"

Using the different versions of "Little Red Riding Hood" examined by Jack Zipes in *The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood* (1993), I would like to exemplify how in different historical times, different writers, from a different perspective and for a different authorial agenda performed poaching activities. The authorial agenda in each case becomes the realization of a story that carries social relevance for a particular group of people. As folk tales did not express the reality of the bourgeois or aristocratic life, members of these groups engaged in poaching, by using the motifs and elements of folk tales to create stories that embodied their own experience and ideology. In modern

times, as the bourgeoisie or aristocratic point of view became alien for a new generation, the story went through some more changes to accommodate the needs of the new audience. I have chosen the story of "Little Red Riding Hood" to exemplify poaching and its causal relationship with relevance, given that this is one of the most popular stories that has been rewritten and modified by many groups of people in the process of history. The writers of the "Little Red Riding Hood" story changed the plot in order to convey a different perspective, took out or added new elements in order to create a text that carried meaning and relevance for their audience.

"The Story of Grandmother"

Long before the literary version of "Little Red Riding Hood" by Perrault came into existence, related stories have been circulating through oral tradition in France. Even though these stories were radically different than Perrault's tale, it is possible that he was influenced by them in creating his own version. According to both Zipes and Tatar, one of the oral versions of "Little Red Riding Hood", called "The Story of Grandmother" recorded by Paul Delarue in 1885 describes the heroine as a brave and cunning peasant girl who manages to sneak out of the house, tricks the wolf and saves herself at the end of the story (Delarue 1993). The story also contains cannibalistic elements (the little girl drinks the grandmother's blood and eats her flesh in state of unawareness) which were later removed from the story by Perrault or the Grimm brothers. In order to understand the relevance of this text for the peasant culture, it is important to examine the social and economic background and the life experience of 15th- and 16th-century French peasantry which background constituted a motivating factor or source of inspiration for the storytellers. This folk tale was inspired by the real-life experience of villagers, and it captured the everyday concerns of agrarian societies, the fear of werewolves and of violence in general, that represented the material conditions of their existence (Delarue 1993: 23). Children were often attacked by animals and even grown-ups in the fields or woods, "hunger often drove people to commit atrocious acts" (Delarue 1993: 23). Therefore, telling stories about dangerous werewolves, as embodiments of violence, was a way to rationalize cruelty and also warn children or help them become aware of such dangers. The social function of the story was to show that talking to strangers in the woods could be dangerous for children (Zipes 1993: 19). Nevertheless, the warning tale did not intend to render the child in a passive role while facing these dangers. Children were rather educated through these stories to be shrewd and get out of such situations safely.

The peasant girl as an embodiment of a "trickster figure" (Tatar 1999: 3) at the end of the original folk tale asks permission from the wolf to go outside, ties the woolen rope attached to her foot around a plum tree and runs away. Therefore, the story in its original form becomes a celebration of "the self-reliance of a young peasant girl" (Zipes 1993: 25). The social experience of the peasant population and their relevance is embodied in both the theme of the story and in the educational message it carries that says: This is our reality and you need to be shrewd to survive.

"Little Red Riding Hood" and "Little Red Cap"

The new genre of fairy tales brought about many differences in the plot and character portrayal of the story. On the one hand, one of the major modifications that has been introduced was the changing of the oral tradition into a written text. Similarly to the form, the content of the story as well had to go through significant changes in order to accommodate the relevance and aspirations of a different (higher) social class. The folk tale with its humor was transformed into a narrative that carried a pedagogical agenda for adults (Tatar 1999: 6). The fairy tale poached the little girl as the subject of the story, but introduced significant changes in her character and the story line as well. Again, in order to understand why these modifications took place we need to look at the historical background of the time, and at the principles or values prevalent in the period of Enlightenment. Even though the members of high society enjoyed listening to stories or even telling stories, the story material that circulated among the lower social classes was not adequate to be implemented in the higher social circles. On the one hand, the folk tale talked about the life experience of the peasants who lived in poverty, and these stories with references to werewolves and violence had no relevance for the life of the bourgeoisie. Moreover the Age of Reason, by its main principles, rejected the imaginative motifs of folk tales and rather preferred stories with moralizing lessons that would discipline children (Tatar 1999: 6–7). The inventiveness of the heroine and the imaginative content of the folk tale in general were not acceptable for the bourgeois middle class as it lacked to promote rationalism. According to Zipes, since the imaginative motifs and symbolical elements of pre-capitalist folk tales run counter to the principles of rationalism and utilitarianism developed by a bourgeois class, they had to be suppressed or made to be irrelevant (2002: 29). During the period of Enlightenment, these stories were too rebellious, too scary or too primitive for the aristocracy or bourgeoisie to accept without alterations. Before distributed among the members of

high society, they needed to be civilized and changed properly. Therefore elements of the folk tale were poached and placed in a new story that carried relevance for the new bourgeoisie audience. This relevance shifted emphasis from the aspect of survival and aptitude of the female character to female docility in order to indoctrinate children with proper behavior and obedience, which were dominant social values during the Enlightenment. The original heroine's wit and shrewdness was not an important story aspect to be preserved by the higher classes; intelligence was exchanged for female docility.

Perrault's story from 1697 borrowed the base story of the original folk tale, but in order to conform to the ideology of his time regarding ideal womanhood, he radically changed the attributes of the peasant girl depicting her as helpless, spoiled and victimized. Zipes (1993: 26) maintains it was Charles Perrault who first introduced the image of helpless girl in fairy tales. Little Red Riding Hood in Perrault's version turns into a "pretty village girl" (Tatar 1999: 3), who is rather naïve and dull, who not only thoughtlessly gives away where the grandmother lives, but also obeys the wolf and takes the long path to get to the grandmother's house. Unlike the peasant girl, she is no longer smart enough to run away; instead, she voluntarily joins the wolf in bed and thus paves the way for her own death. Perrault's story is written with the intention to regulate the character of the child through offering patterns or models of "proper" behavior. While the reality of the folk tale heroine is a dangerous world where she needs to learn how to survive, the reality of Little Red Riding Hood is a world where girls need to be obedient in all circumstances. To create this story, Perrault was inspired by the growing political views of the bourgeois-aristocratic values that emphasized responsibility, asceticism, diligence and honesty (Zipes 1993: 29). In order to imbue "Little Red Riding Hood" with a "moral message" (Tatar 1999: 5), the story was altered according to the expectations of a new society who demanded new relevance for their stories.

The Grimm brothers in the 19th century further altered the story of Little Red Riding Hood. They poached the story line and the character but infused it with the puritan ideologies of the Victorian age, which emphasized male dominance and dependency on the side of the woman. "Little Red Cap" was written with the intention of satisfying the morals and ethics of the bourgeoisie and to further emphasize new ideals of proper child behavior. The issue of obedience is again in the focus of the story and Little Red Cap is turned into an even more helpless and naïve little girl, who is punished for being disobedient: she as well is tricked and swallowed up by the wolf. The significant change introduced by the Grimm brothers into the story line was the character of the hunter, the savior of the story who is a representation of the 19th-century male patriarch. The hunter comes across the sleeping wolf, cuts open his belly

and saves Little Red Cap and the Grandmother at the end of the story. Zipes claims that while the original folktale of "Little Red Riding Hood" was told from a female perspective and portrayed the heroine as witty and courageous, the literary version of this story created by the Grimm brothers was written from a male perspective, within the civilizing process of the Western world which celebrated the heroism of the male character (1993: 31). By the 18th and 19th century the fairy tale had become a "household good" meant to dissipate images that celebrated patriarchy in society (Zipes 1997: 67). While in the original folk tale the hero of the story is Little Red Riding Hood, the Grimm brothers' version introduces the character of the hunter who takes over the role of the hero and thus the story becomes a celebration of male dominance rather than a celebration of the courage and wit of the female heroine. The Grimm fairy tale and the Perrault's story exchanged obedience for the values of courage and wit as the new ideal behavior for female characters to accommodate the social relevance of their time. "Little Red Riding Hood" and "Little Red Cap" became stories about the regulation of little girls' behavior, as a result of the Puritan values and ideologies that were prevalent when this literary genre was born and circulated.

Contemporary "Little Red Riding Hood" Stories

"Little Red Riding Hood" inspired many other authors in creating their own version of the tale. Many of these versions reinforced certain stereotypes, others rather had emancipatory values, but in fact all the adaptations conformed to historical interest and were shaped by the social practices of an age (Tatar 1999: xiv). Some versions preserved the style and story line of the Grimm's story and imbued it with new elements; other versions introduced more radical changes. All through history, the "Little Red Riding Hood" stories served many different purposes: They were imbued with political and religious messages, served as metaphors for demasking various historical conditions, and with the rise of the civil rights movement and feminism, once again they were radically altered by women writers to reclaim the independence and wit that once had been taken away from the female character. The existing fairy tales that became well-known in Western popular culture emphasized male dominance and rendered women in passive roles. With the rise of feminist criticism, these fairy tales as well as other culture texts were severely criticized for their patriarchal images and traditional sex role portrayals, by the representatives of the feminist movement from the 1960s. Women writers rejected

the stereotypical images that for many centuries described women as inherently irrational and irresponsible.

A feminist story "Little Polly's Riding Hood", from 1955 by Catherine Storr, depicts a brave and cunning little girl who is able to ridicule and outwit the wolf. The story does preserve elements of the original tale such as the journey to grandmother or the red hood, but also introduces significant changes. The setting of the story is in modern times, the little girl takes the train to grandmother's house. Clever Polly is even smarter than the original character of the folk tale; she does not listen to the hungry wolf. Another feminist adaptation of the "Little Red Riding Hood" story is written by Audrey Ackroyd, Marge Ben-Tovim, Catherine Meredith, and Anne Neville in 1972. This version of "Little Red Riding Hood" is very close to the original historical perspective of the folk tale, and adapts the theme of fear, that even though was not a part of the original tale in a direct way served as the main source of inspiration. In this version of the story written by Ackroyd *et al.*, the little girl, even though she is afraid, overcomes her fear in the end and kills the wolf. "Little Red Cap" from 1978 by O.F. Gmelin also reinforces the fearless and confident female image. This version is endowed with humor that comes both from the narrative style of the author and the content of the story. Gmelin preserves the main story line but adds new elements to the tale creating thus a version that is no longer a cautionary tale. Even though the wolf manages to deceive Little Red Riding Hood and swallows her, she is able to cut the wolf's belly open with her brother's jackknife that she took for the road, and thus saves herself in the end. Neither obedience nor male heroism is a theme in Gmelin's feminist tale. The new Little Red Riding Hood in these feminist stories is brave, intelligent, and confident. She is able to learn through experience, she is independent and capable of taking care of herself. Through her confrontation with the wolf she establishes her own identity and becomes her own person (Gmelin 1993: 61).

The analysis of the "Little Red Riding Hood" stories reveals how particular groups of people created relevance through poaching. The oral folktale that mirrors the everyday life experience of the peasant culture undergoes significant changes in the process of adaptation for higher social classes. Some of the major elements of the original story that has been poached and altered during the centuries are the motifs of the journey to the grandmother's house, the gullibility of the little girl and the motif of salvation or survival. Interestingly, the journey as the important starting point of the story is almost unaltered in all the versions of the "Little Red Riding Hood" stories, unlike the character traits of the girl and the mode of her survival. In the original story the little girl appears to be a witty and smart folk hero; she tricks the wolf and saves her own life. These elements are radically changed by Perrault and the Grimm

brothers. They turn Little Red Riding Hood into a naïve, spoiled and victimized young woman, who is either punished as a result of her own naivety or is forgiven and saved by a male figure, the hunter.

The feminist versions of these stories written much later, restore the original characteristics of the hero figure; Little Red Riding Hood once again becomes independent, courageous and intelligent and finds a way to save her own life. Feminist writers, through altering the Perrault and Grimm versions created female heroes that were no longer helpless and innocent. Storr, Gmelin or Ackroyd *et al*. claimed "relevance" for themselves in a world where patriarchal images were no longer accepted or stereotypical images of femaleness were no longer left unchallenged. In order to find their own relevance and meaning, or connection with the "Little Red Riding Hood" story, feminists in fact reestablished the character of the original folk tale. As de Certeau (1984) points out, the goals and convictions or the educational institutions of the Enlightenment have been destroyed. The text as a "system of verbal and iconic signs is a reservoir of forms to which the reader must give a meaning" (de Certeau 1984: 169). Contemporary readers claim authority and independence from the given text, resist the text and manipulate it according to their own needs. Readers are not passive consumers, but rather producers or writers who will create their own stories if the given text does not offer relevance to their own social experience.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The analysis of popular culture, poaching and the examination of the transition of folk tales into literary fairy tales reveals that these concepts are closely connected to the lack of relevance that determines various subcultures to convey new meanings. I do not intend to suggest that the members of aristocracy or bourgeoisie in transforming folktales into literary fairy tales created popular culture, as that is defined by modern theorists. However there is an interesting correlation between the way popular culture transforms the commodity products of the powerful into something of their own and the way some members of the bourgeoisie or aristocracy transformed the product of folk culture, the folktales, into a literary genre of their own, imbuing it with a meaning that was relevant for their own experience in the 16th–19th century. Both contemporary subcultures such as feminist folk tale writers and the subculture of the early capitalist bourgeois society used a similar method in conveying new meanings – they borrowed sources from a different group: the bourgeoisie from the peasantry, contemporary subcultures from the dominant culture. The

stories that became well-known and stable in mainstream culture, and which also served as resource for the poaching activities of various subcultures, were texts that the bourgeois society has produced. Even though the context and the content of these two approaches are different, in their structure they are similar as they both rely on poaching. The bourgeois or aristocratic writers altered the folk tale to make it relevant to their social experience, similarly to the Trekkers who altered the story of *Star Trek* to gain relevance for themselves, or the feminist writers who altered the patriarchal stories for the same reason. Thus the similarities between the poaching activities of past and present groups could be illustrated with a model that defines DOMINANT and MARGINAL as deep structures of poaching within which bourgeois writers and their texts as well as contemporary subcultures and their texts will be configured and paralleled.

Folk **(marginal text)** → Bourgeois **(dominant group)** → **POACHING** → Fairy tales

Fairy tale **(dominant text)** → Feminist writers **(marginal group)** → **POACHING** → Feminist folk tales

I defined folk tales as marginal texts, because with the rise of literary fairy tales, many of these oral versions, such as the one about Little Red Riding Hood, became marginalized. The version that is well known for us today is the one produced by Perrault or the Grimms. The aristocracy or bourgeoisie, by using the stories of peasants as a source, performed poaching just as feminist writers have used the resources of the dominant culture in creating new meanings. Through this correlation I do not intend to abolish the ideological difference between what popular culture and the early capitalist society tries or tried to convey. My intention was simply to identify poaching as a method of transformation for the sake of relevance that can be used by both members of the popular culture and by the members of a group that belonged to aristocratic or bourgeoisie circles of previous historical times.

There are several implications of these findings that would challenge the validity of Fiske's theory on the concept of subcultures or marginalized groups and their resistance towards mainstream culture texts and ideology. Popular culture has shifted from subcultural sphere into the mainstream, and the concept of subcultures or marginal groups does no longer represent the reality of present-day individuals who describe themselves as members of popular culture (Gray, Sandvoss & Harrington 2007: 364).

We can ask whether the transition from oral folktales into literary fairy tales and the expansion of this genre from the salon society into the main-

stream marked the first popular culture activity in the process of history? Such a question as well as the inquiry on what is popular culture today, who creates popular culture today, and how is that different from the way it was cultivated twenty years ago requires further examination.

REFERENCES

Ackroyd, Audrey; Ben-Tovim, Marge; Meredith, Catherine & Neville, Anne (The Merseyside Fairy Story Collective) 1993. Little Red Riding Hood. In: J. Zipes (ed.) *The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood*. New York: Routledge, pp. 251–255.

Bradkūnas, Elena 1975 'If You Kill a Snake – The Sun Will Cry.' Folktale Type 425–M A Study in Oicotype and Folk Belief. *Lituanus: Lithuanian Quarterly Journal of Arts and Sciences* Vol. 21. No. 1. Available at http://www.lituanus.org/1975/75_1_01.htm, last accessed in November 2008.

Delarue, Paul 1993. The Story of Grandmother. In: J. Zipes (ed.) *The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood*. New York: Routledge, pp. 21–23.

de Certeau, Michel 1984. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Transl. Steven Rendall. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Fiske, John 1989a. *Reading the Popular*. Boston: Unwin Hyman.

Fiske, John 1989b. *Understanding Popular Culture*. Boston: Unwin Hyman.

Foucault, Michel 1984. What is Enlightenment? In: P. Rabinow (ed.) *The Foucault Reader*. New York: Pantheon Books, pp. 32–50.

Gmelin, O. F. 1993. Little Red Cap. In: J. Zipes (ed.) *The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood*. New York: Routledge, pp. 274–277.

Gray, Jonathan; Sandvoss, Cornel & Harrington, C. Lee (eds.) 2007. *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World*. New York: New York University Press.

Grimm, Jacob & Wilhelm 1993. Little Red Cap. In: J. Zipes (ed.) *The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood*. New York: Routledge, pp. 135–138.

Jenkins, Henry 1992. *Textual Poachers: Television Fans & Participatory Culture.* New York: Routledge.

Jenkins, Henry 2006. *Fans, Bloggers, and Gamers: Exploring Participatory Culture*. New York: New York University Press.

Kant, Immanuel 1995. What is Enlightenment? In: I. Kramnic (ed.) *The Portable Enlightenment Reader*. New York: Penguin Books, pp. 1–7.

Lüthi, Max 1982. *The European Folktale: Form and Nature*. Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues.

Perrault, Charles 1993. Little Red Riding Hood. In: J. Zipes (ed.) *The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood*. New York: Routledge, pp. 91–93.

Pinkney, Jerry 2000. *Aesop's Fables.* New York: Chronicle Books.

Storr, Catherine 1993. Little Polly's Riding Hood. In: J. Zipes (ed.) *The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood*. New York: Routledge, pp. 234–238.

Tatar, Maria (ed.) 1999. *The Classic Fairy Tales*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company Inc.

Wolfe, Brooks 2006. The Horse & The Bowl. Available at http://www.olsenbooks.com/stories.html, last accessed in November 2008.

Zipes, Jack 1993. *The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood*. New York: Routledge. [Original work published in 1983.]

Zipes, Jack 1997. *Happily Ever After: Fairy Tales, Children and the Culture Industry.* New York: Routledge. [Original work published 1979.]

Zipes, Jack 2002. *Breaking the Magic Spell: Radical Theories of Folk & Fairy Tales.* Lexington: University Press of Kentucky.